



**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**

1: 00 p.m. January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Mayor Bob Foster**  
*2008 State of the City Address*  
*January 15, 2008*

Good afternoon.

Members of the City Council;

City Attorney Bob Shannon;  
City Auditor Laura Doud;  
City Prosecutor Tom Reeves;

City Manager Pat West and Assistant Manager Suzanne Frick

Police and Fire Command staffs,  
Department heads, City Staff  
and commissioners.

Let me also welcome for the very first time, everyone watching at home on Charter Cable or via web feeds on the internet.

Thank you for your civic engagement.

I want to thank the President Matt Kinley, immediate Past President Byron Schweigert, the entire Chamber Board and all the Chamber staff for their efforts to put together this special event for the past 10 years.

Today closes a chapter in the presentation of the State of the City.

A new chapter for this speech, in whatever form it takes, will draw on the successes of today.

Now, it is my pleasure to present you with the State of our City.

We are a city where commerce and community values unite to produce creative and civic activity.

We've always been welcoming to visitors – From our time as Willmore City and “Iowa by the Sea;”

In the past, it was the Naval Shipyard and thousands of sailors stopping here on their way to points both east and west;

These days, travelers visit the hundreds of restaurants within walking distance to the convention center and families flock to the Aquarium of the Pacific in one of California's only waterfront downtowns.

But for those of you that may miss things like they were, don't worry. Thanks to The Outer Limits Tattoo Parlor, you can still get that tattoo you've always wanted.

But make no mistake, we are a city on the move.

From an industry town dependent on federal spending to a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy supported by international trade and the burgeoning "creative class."

Still celebrating our neighborhoods;

Fostering diversity and a culture of tolerance and understanding;

We have reinvented ourselves and embraced change.

And 2007 certainly brought dynamic change to the City of Long Beach.

There is new leadership throughout the ranks of City Management and a new "captain" for the iconic Queen Mary.

We took steps to modernize our municipal government through evolutions in the City's Charter;

And 70% of the voters supported an increase to the oil extraction fee dedicated to public safety. As a result, the City has added 14 police officers to the force, and a brand new fire truck is now in service on the Eastside.

Thank you, Long Beach.

We are a city in ascent.

And California and the rest of the Country are taking notice.

This year, our Downtown was recognized as one of the "Top 10 Turnaround Downtowns" in the United States by the Urban Land Institute.

And today, I have the pleasure of announcing that Long Beach has just been chosen to host the annual marquee gathering of remarkable people who shape our world – the TED Conference.

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design – and it is a community of the finest thinkers and doers of our time. TED’s invitation-only conference brings together 1,000 remarkable people from across the globe that are imagining, designing and creating the future of our world -- and those remarkable people will gather annually right here in Long Beach beginning in 2009.

Congratulations to Steve Goodling and his team at the Convention and Visitors’ Bureau.

Each of these successes is possible because we have largely remained focused on what’s important – a cleaner environment, a dynamic local economy and on the very first job of local government: public safety.

Last fall, as wildfires raged and California’s resources were strained in an unprecedented fashion, 72 of our firefighters answered the call.

The front line of a wildfire is intense; and the situation is unpredictable in the middle of a fire that will spread at the speed of a gale force wind.

And you know they wouldn’t have it any other way. They are professionals in every sense of the word – our Long Beach Firefighters are the very best in the business.

Last year, we gathered in this room only weeks after one of the most difficult moments ever endured by our community when two of our police officers battled for their lives at Memorial Hospital after being gunned down in the line of duty.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Long Beach Police Officers Abe Yap and Roy Wade.

Last year, our murder rate dropped to its lowest level since 1974;

The Police Department is now at its highest level of staffing ever. In the last 18 months we’ve budgeted for an additional 30 police officers and run two academies in one year to fill long-standing vacant positions. In hard numbers, that is 50 more police officers on the street.

But, as we all know, putting more police on the streets is only one part of the equation. Crime takes advantage of our societal neglect, in the physical condition of our neighborhoods, and in the lack of opportunity for our citizens, especially our young people.

When it comes to marshalling the combined efforts of code enforcement, nuisance abatement, neighborhood services, and law enforcement we need to do more of what we are already doing well.

Look no further than Andy Street, a block and a half that illustrates the possibilities when we’re united in our determination to make things better. A dedicated group of citizens said, “We’ve had enough.” And Laverne Duncan and city staff said, “We know a way.”

Andy Street, you are an inspiration to us all.

Citywide, graffiti removal efforts are on a fast track: what used to take 30 days now gets a response in 48 hours.

Long Beach Unified continues to be among the most effective school districts in the country – and this past year was nominated for its second Broad Prize for Urban Education, becoming the first former winner to again be selected as a finalist.

Providing economic opportunities for our young people continues to be a personal passion of mine and that is why I am very pleased to announce that the unique educational partnership between my office, the Long Beach Unified School District, organized labor, and private business is a reality.

Way over there in the back of the room, it is my pleasure to present to you the ACE Academy graduating class of 2010.

This past year also saw significant progress on adding park space and improving our environmental health.

We added nearly 15 acres of much needed open space in our urban core. And thanks to the efforts of Supervisor Don Knabe, the River Link Project connecting the entire western flank of the City will become a reality.

The City Council voted to make Long Beach the first city to join both the Climate Registry and the California Climate Action Registry to track our progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Long Beach Transit continues to use more hybrid buses than any other system its size in the country;

And we will become the first “green airport” in the nation as we modernize the facility by utilizing solar power and emissions reductions programs for runway equipment and on-site vehicles.

We asked residents and businesses to conserve water -- and you responded – in record amounts. Indeed, our water use is the same today as it was 25 years ago, even with a 35% larger population. Thank you to the Water Commission and Director Kevin Wattier for their leadership.

Long Beach became the first large California city to require major private development projects to be LEED certified; and we broke ground on the The Top of the Town’s very own LEED certified 127,000 square foot Target store.

Our City government actually “walked the walk,” setting standards for all future municipal buildings and opening the Mark Twain Library -- Not only our first new library in more than 30 years, but the City’s first LEED – certified silver building.

And as 2007 came to a close, we played host to the largest solar power conference ever – underneath the 700-kilowatt solar array on our very own Convention Center rooftop.

We also made progress on the seemingly insurmountable challenge to our coastal waters -- created by polluted urban runoff.

The Mayor’s Water Quality Task Force assembled city staff with experts from outside organizations like Heal the Bay for the first time to take a focused look at solutions to our water quality challenges.

Through the collaboration between our City and the County of Los Angeles, we were able to isolate the sources of contamination and develop a temporary fix to the pollution problem in Alamitos Bay.

However, we still face an uphill battle in resolving these issues over the long term, especially with the polluted urban runoff flowing from the LA and San Gabriel Rivers.

It is no secret that the Port of Long is the engine of our nation’s international economy. But it is also the largest threat to public health in Southern California.

But I am proud to say, there is no other instance where Long Beach’s leadership on the environment is more apparent or more important than in last month’s historic vote by the Harbor Commission to clean up dirty diesel trucks calling on the twin ports.

The fee on a 20-ft. container will be \$35 -- merely one tenth of one percent of the \$35,000 worth of cargo each carries.

And when you stop to think about it, the costs are already in the system – its just the wrong people who have paid the price.

Now the cost of goods movement is borne right where it should be – on the cost of goods sold, not by our children with truncated lung development, increased rates of asthma and premature deaths in neighborhoods like West Long Beach.

Join me in congratulating and thanking the Port of Long Beach staff and Harbor Commissioners Mario Cordero, Jim Hankla, Nick Sramek, Mike Walter, and Doris Topsy-Elvord.

Whether on environmental issues or the continuing rebirth of Downtown, the successes of this past year make us more ready than ever to take the bold steps we need to tackle our challenges head on.

I spoke earlier about our history and how we are a city that has embraced change but not forgotten its roots.

Reflect for a moment on how much of what we enjoy, on how much of what we've achieved, is due in part to the investment made by those who came before us.

Like many cities in California, Long Beach has fallen behind in those investments.

Our streets and roads, our environmental systems, our public buildings, our health and safety facilities, the key components to our civic health, are in need of repair or replacement.

We cannot be a great city with a vibrant economy if we don't address this problem.

What business will want to locate here or what family will want to re-locate here if we are in poor condition?

Our economic and social well-being requires us to fix our physical facilities and invest in the future.

Remember, crime will continue to look for opportunities in our neglect.

The basic infrastructure that we all depend upon in everyday civic life is literally crumbling around us; and quite simply, it's time to fix things.

Later this year, I will ask the Council to place a citywide community investment bond measure before the voters.

A thoughtful, long-term investment plan for the Long Beach of tomorrow to fix streets and sidewalks, public safety buildings, and storm water systems; upgrade parks and libraries, and finally build a civic center complex of which the whole city can be proud.

This plan will include provisions for the revenue necessary to make these investments, and everything will be considered in seeking a legitimate solution to our needs.

We owe the future generations of Long Beach nothing less.

And while we are on the subject of money;

Let me be blunt. We do not yet have a structurally balanced budget.

Despite substantial spending reductions and aggressive cuts that eliminated over 450 positions, 225 vehicles from the city fleet and cut over \$70 million in department spending over the past 4 years, all the legitimate demands on the General Fund cannot be met. We have not yet closed our structural deficit.

Knowing the historical and systemic basis for this situation is instructive but that alone won't bring us the right answers.

City Manager Pat West has taken aggressive steps to further reduce spending beyond the adopted budget by cutting an additional \$5 million;

And early indications are that the Police Department has seen a 40% reduction in overtime costs since the start of the fiscal year.

But our work is not done. We will need to continually assess our core services and reexamine all of our departments for improved operation.

And as part of that self-assessment, we need to look closely at how we do business within our own bureaucracy to complete the chapter in our changing civic identity that began 15 years ago.

Now, our City's economy has a far more diversified base and a wider arc for growth.

Here now is an elite public university among the nation's leaders in graduating nurses, teachers and engineers; one of the largest engines for international trade in the world, first-rate medical facilities and a downtown right on the Pacific Ocean.

To fill that wider arc we have to understand that the game is not always going to come to us. Greater opportunity will make more demands on us all to make things happen.

Fulfilling our potential will take some adjustments in our culture; we'll need to provide services that live up to our sales pitch.

We need to do more to reach across department lines and re-focus on service; Re-orient our "group think" to be more of a facilitator and less that of a regulator.

Most importantly, as City Manager Pat West has said: Our city staff needs to dream again.

I'm confident we can solve these problems with more hard work and a little imagination. This is the commitment I have made and will be tireless in achieving.

And I know that institutional change is never easy. But it has been the staple of our City since its inception.

It is part of the DNA of Long Beach;

From Willmore City to "Iowa by the Sea;"

What will our next chapter be?

We live in a good city, a caring city, a tolerant city, an understanding city.

A city united in its belief that we can become a great city and still maintain those qualities that make us special.

Last year, I spoke of 2007 being the year we began to realize our potential. 2008 is the year we recognize we are different than we once were and begin to build ourselves into the city we want to be.

A city that invests for the future;

A city that recognizes that its social and economic health depends on smart growth, quality services and sound infrastructure;

And its character depends on its continued caring and tolerance for others.

I believe in Long Beach -- and I know you do as well.

This is the Long Beach I see if we work -- and dream again -- together.

Thank you.

# # #